

Regular Fiction

BOOK TITLE: Touching Spirit Bear

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(THIS SHOULD BE ABOUT 2 PAGES ON A WORD DOCUMENT)

1. Describe the setting of this book in detail: paint a picture with words.

The primary setting of this novel is a remote island in Alaska. The island is frequently plagued by torrential rains and storms; it is not uncommon to find fallen trees from the severe weather. Near the tree line is a small wooden shelter covered with tar paper to keep out the elements. On the island, there is also a frigid, fresh water pond and stream. Near the pond is a large hill with large rocks at the bottom. The island is also home to a variety of wildlife. Beavers make their home in the stream, and wolves prowl the island. During the warmer months, mosquitos buzz around. A mysterious, white bear lurks on the island.

2. Describe the main characters (personalities, appearance, and their role in the story). Did any characters change or surprise you during the story? **(At least 3)**

The main character of this novel is Cole Matthews. Cole comes from a troubled home; his parents are both alcoholics, and his father beats him. In the beginning of the story, Cole is a disagreeable teenager who is always in trouble. He believes that everything should be given to him and everyone should be afraid of him. Cole had broken into a hardware store and thought he had gotten away with it. When Peter, a boy from his school, told on him and the police questioned Cole, he attacked Peter and left him severely injured. After being banished to a remote island in Alaska, Cole reflected on his actions and began to change.

Garvey is Cole's parole officer. He is a native Tlingit Indian from Alaska. Garvey is constantly trying to push Cole to better himself and gain an understanding of the world. It is by Garvey's suggestion that Cole ends up banished in Alaska rather than locked up in jail. Garvey prompts Cole to apply for Circle Justice, a Native American system in which community members gather to decide on a path to healing for both the victim and the offender. Garvey does not give up on Cole through the entire novel.

Edwin is a Tlingit elder who initially built a shelter for Cole on the island. Edwin explains to Cole that life is a circle; all things are connected. He and Garvey both act as advocates for Cole.

3. Which character are you *either* most similar to *or* most different from? Why?

I relate most to Edwin. Edwin professed ideas of the connectedness and circularity of the world which are philosophies to which I subscribe. He understands that all actions have an effect which is much more than anyone can understand.

4. Summarize the story and *focus* on how it evolved.

The story begins with Cole on the island. Through flashbacks, we learn that Cole has been banished to the island. He had beat up Peter Driscoll after Peter had told on him for breaking into a shop. Cole's parole officer, Garvey, recommended that he apply for Circle Justice. In Circle Justice, Cole, his parents, his lawyer, Peter, Peter's parents, and Peter's lawyer came together along with other members of the community to decide what the best consequence was for Cole. Due to the severity of the attack on Peter, it was decided that Cole needed to be away from society. Rather than sentencing him to jail, he was banished to a remote island.

Upon arriving to the island, Cole burnt down the shelter which had been built for him by Edwin. He tried to swim away from the island, but he did not account for the incoming tide. On the island, Cole encountered a white bear. The bear did not appear to be afraid of Cole which angered Cole even more. He attempted to kill the bear, but the bear mauled him and left him near dead. When Garvey and Edwin returned to the island to check on Cole, they transported him to Edwin's village where he was briefly nursed until they were able to transport him to a hospital for six months.

The experience of nearly dying had changed Cole's perceptions of the world. He realized that he was not the most important person and that other people were not the cause of his problems. After much debate, Cole was permitted to return to the island. He had to rebuild his shelter by himself. The second portion of the book details Cole's experiences on the island.

5. What is your opinion of this story? Would you recommend it to others? Why, or why not?

I liked this book. In the beginning, I was annoyed by Cole's character. As the book progressed and Cole evolved, the story became less obnoxious. I would recommend this book to others. I think that it is a good story, and it incorporates themes which are frequently called upon in literature such as forgiveness and interconnectedness.